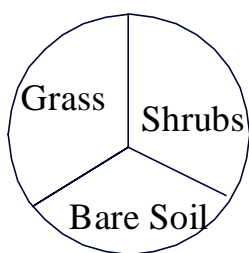




# THE COVEY HEADQUARTERS

Volume 12      Issue 2      Summer 2013

This newsletter is aimed at cooperators and sports-people in Missouri to provide information on restoring quail. This is a joint effort of the Missouri Department of Conservation, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and University of Missouri Extension. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list or have suggestions for future articles please contact [jeff.powelson@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:jeff.powelson@mdc.mo.gov) or 816-232-6555 x122 or write to the address shown.



The name of this newsletter is taken from an old concept.....that a quail covey operates from a headquarters (shrubby cover). If the rest of the covey's habitat needs are nearby, a covey should be present. We are encouraging landowners to manage their quail habitat according to this concept. Use **shrubs** as the cornerstone for your quail management efforts. Manage for a **diverse grass, broadleaf weed and legume mixture and provide bare ground** with row crops, food plots or light disking **right next to** the shrubby area.

## Brood Habitat – Where the Bugs Are!

During the late 1990s, researchers at Auburn University tagged and followed more than 1,000 adult bobwhites to determine brood habitat preferences. They also collected more than 10,000 samples from insect sweep nets to compare insect abundance on four types of potential quail brood habitat.

Close to 80 percent of all broods were raised in fallow, weedy fields which were preferred over three other categories of potential brood habitat including corn fields, woodland clearings and burned pine woods. Analysis of the insect availability in these four habitat types tells us why: That's where the bugs were! While little difference existed between woodland openings and burned woodlands, weedy fields produced two to five times more insects than other habitat types. Insects were most scarce in corn fields.



Fallow areas dominated by broadleaved weeds and the bugs these areas host are crucial for quail broods and heavily used by adults in the spring and summer. Weedy patches that provide both overhead cover and bare ground, like that pictured above, may be your best bet for growing more quail.



If you want to establish brood habitat by planting, consider enrolling in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). The pollinator practice (CP42) improves habitat for pollinators which in turn creates great brood habitat for quail. Contact the Farm Service Agency to see if you qualify for CP42. They take applications on a continuous basis.

CP42 requires a diverse mix of wildflowers that will attract the insects that quail chicks and adults need. Below is a picture of pollinator habitat. There has been a pair of quail using it all spring. Maybe they are nesting close by? A rooster pheasant spent the first week of May crowing and displaying within and adjacent to the pollinator habitat.



## **Nesting Season Notes –**

- Quail nest from May to early October.
- Female quail can produce up to three successful nests per nesting season.
- Male bobwhites incubate up to 30 percent of the nests each year.
- If a male incubates the nest, it will also care for the chicks. Chick survival is equal despite the sex of the adult raising it.
- A single nesting cycle requires 47-55 days, beginning with nest site selection and nest construction.
- Nests are generally located within 50 feet of an edge.
- Eggs are laid at a rate of one per day.
- Clutches range from 10 to 15 eggs

# Bobwhite Quail and Native Pollinator Field Day

## New Tours and Techniques

June 20, 2013

1:00 pm to 7:00 pm

MU Bradford Research Center, Columbia, Missouri

*Designed for landowners, students, quail & native plant enthusiasts; Meet the experts and see exhibits; No fee and no reservations required for Field Day.*

*Drinks and hamburgers provided after the event with a completed evaluation!*

### 1:00- 3:00 PM Quail Management Demonstrations:

- Drill Calibration for Seeding, Herbicide Calibration & Application, Dog Training and Prescribed Burning

### 3:00-4:00 PM Landowner Panel - Successes and Challenges:

- Landowner discussion and Q & A Session

### 4:15- 7:00 PM Quail Ecology, Habitat Management and Concurring Native Plants and Pollinators:

- Bobwhite Quail 101, Habitat Management Decisions, Predators and Bobwhites, Population Dynamics and Fall Covey Count

**\*NEW\* - "Habitat Help Desk: Get a custom tailored wildlife plan for your property"**

### One Hour Field Tours: 4:15-7:00 pm

#### Walking Tour

- ✓ Native Plant Walk: Identification and Landscaping

#### Wagon Tour

- ✓ Field Borders, Edge Habitats and Pollinator enhancement
- ✓ Conducting Quail Whistle Counts and Habitat Management for Quail
- ✓ Native Grasses and Forbs For Drought, Insects, Wildlife and Agriculture
- ✓ Meet the Neighbor: Habitat Tour Featuring Selected Management Techniques



### Sponsored by:

University of Missouri College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources  
MU Extension, Lincoln University  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
Missouri Soybean Association & USDA NRCS



**Directions:** From the junction of U.S. 63 and Hwy AC on the south edge of Columbia, go 5.5 miles east on New Haven Road, turn right (south) on Rangeline Road and go south for a mile to the Bradford Research Center entrance on the right. For alternative directions visit our web site at <http://aes.missouri.edu/Bradford>.

#### For More Information Contact:

Tim Reinbott: 573-884-7945, [reinbottt@missouri.edu](mailto:reinbottt@missouri.edu)  
Bob Pierce: 573-882-4337; [piercer@missouri.edu](mailto:piercer@missouri.edu)



## Covey Headquarter Management Calendar

### June

General CRP signup ends June 14.

Begin spraying actively growing Johnson grass.

Mow newly planted native grass stands to a height of 6-8 inches for weed control.

Peak of quail hatching is June 15.

Conduct breeding bird surveys now through June 30.

Contact MDC or NRCS for burn plan assistance.

Seed milo, millet, and forage sorghum food plots before June 30.

### July

Spray sericea lespedeza now through September.

Mow newly planted native grass stands a second time to a height of 6-8 inches for weed control.

Excessive June and July rains shifts peak quail hatch to August.

Disk CRP stands starting July 16.

Improve wildflower diversity by burning warm-season grass CRP starting July 16.

Apply herbicide to set back warm-season grass CRP starting July 16.

### August

Till firebreaks to prepare for prescribed burns.

Mow or burn fescue to prepare for fall herbicide treatments.

Continue to treat sericea lespedeza through September.

Re-nests and second quail broods hatching – do not mow idle areas.

## CCRP NEWS

The Farm Service Agency is once again taking offers for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). Under CCRP, there is no competition and no ranking. If the land offered meets the basic eligibility requirements you are eligible for the program. There are many CCRP practices available. Some practices are even available on pastureland with opportunities for fencing livestock out of streams and ponds. Opportunities may exist for alternative water sources as well. **Most practices offer tremendous wildlife benefits if the proper grass species are selected.**

Great CCRP quail practices include the CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, the CP38 State Acres for Wildlife Practice (SAFE), and the CP42 pollinator practice. Some CCRP practices allow shrub plantings, downed tree structures, and edge feathering to further benefit quail and other grassland birds.

Additionally, in response to the continued loss of general CRP acres and the important wildlife habitat it provides in Missouri, the Missouri Department of Conservation is continuing the MDC CRP Incentive Program in select counties. Eight new counties have just been added – Gasconade, Osage, Maries, Moniteau, Morgan, Perry, Lafayette, and St. Genevieve.

Through the program, MDC is offering landowners a one-time incentive payment of \$100-\$150 per acre for enrolling in CP33, CP38, and CP42 practices. There is also cost-share assistance for establishing downed tree structures, edge feathering, and spraying fescue and brome adjacent to CRP acres. Additional incentives exist for mid-contract management activities – prescribed burning, disking, chemical application and forb/legume interseeding.

The MDC CRP Incentive is available in the following counties: Adair, Andrew, Atchison, Bates, Bollinger, Buchanan, Butler, Caldwell, Cape Girardeau, Cass, Carroll, Chariton, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Dade, Daviess, DeKalb, Dunklin, Franklin, Gasconade, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Knox, Jackson, Johnson, Lafayette, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Linn, Livingston, Macon, Maries, Mercer, Mississippi, Monroe, Moniteau, Morgan, New Madrid, Osage, Nodaway, Pemiscot, Perry, Pike, Platte, Putnam, Randolph,



Ray, Ripley, St. Charles, St. Genevieve, Schuyler, Scotland, Scott, Shelby, Stoddard, Sullivan, Vernon, Warren, and Worth.

Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) staff can help farmers and other eligible landowners determine program eligibility, options, and seeding mixes to help sustain healthy forests, fish and wildlife. Visit [www.mdc.mo.gov](http://www.mdc.mo.gov) to find local MDC Private Land Conservationists under "Who's My Local Contact."

For more information on the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program and other available programs, contact the local USDA Service Center and speak with an FSA representative or visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp) for program details.

## NITPICKING HABITAT MANAGEMENT – STOP THE “DEAD ZONE”

Most landowners start recreational mowing in June or July during the peak of the bobwhite and pheasant nesting season. In a good conservation effort, landowners will often mow around a quail or turkey nest. Rarely do the birds return. Look at a recently mowed field and there's not many places for a covey to hide. It's pretty easy to see why mowing entire fields is tough on wildlife, especially bobwhites. However, many people don't realize that mowing field edges – creating a “dead zone” – is also bad for quail.

The “dead zone” often develops around the edges of fields next to good woody cover, fencerows or timber. Some landowners even create “dead zones” around food plots. Depending on the size of the mower and enthusiasm of the landowner, the “dead zone” is typically 20 to 60 feet wide.

The “dead zone” is bad news for quail. A well-manicured “dead zone” can kill or deter quail any time of the year. During the spring and summer, mowing field edges can kill a devoted quail on the nest or even a fleeing brood of young birds. During the fall and winter, the mowed area will make quail vulnerable to predators as the covey moves back and forth from covey headquarters to either feeding or roosting sites. Conditions can be exaggerated during periods of ice and snow since cover is often degraded during these critical times. To make matters worse, the constant mowing of the “dead zone” will promote the growth of tall fescue and smooth brome which will eventually contaminate the adjacent woody cover and grass field, making your best quail habitat worthless. If that isn't enough remember that quail rarely venture more than 70 feet from woody cover so mowing a “dead zone” destroys some of the most productive space for bobwhites.



*Constantly mowing field edges creates a “dead zone” for quail. The “dead zone” destroys productive quail habitat, can kill quail, is a waste of money, and promotes the growth of fescue and brome. This landowner should consider eliminating mowing, mowing a narrower path or moving the path out into the field. This field edge should be sprayed with glyphosate to eliminate tall fescue and then edge feathered.*

Unfortunately for quail and many other grassland birds, people just like to mow. Often it is done for appearance or hunting access. Some landowners like mowed paths to walk along while hunting. A firebreak that is disked every two or three years provides just as easy walking. Others think summer mowing will help control woody sprouts. Actually, summer mowing only cuts off the top of the sprout,

leaving sharp spikes for your ATV and truck tires. In a year or two the sprouts will be right back. If you are interested in seeing more quail consider these facts before starting up the mower.

Many people believe it is alright to mow in late July because quail are done nesting for the year. Research throughout the Midwest has shown that quail will attempt to nest well into September! With our cool start to spring, the peak quail hatch date will likely shift into mid-July this year. Another way to think about recreational mowing during the summer nesting season (May to September) is you might mow over a quail nest or brood that you didn't see. Now you will never see them come November.

Some landowners will say they are only making one or two passes around the edges of the fields – creating a “dead zone”. That can't hurt, or can it? A research project in southern Iowa found that bobwhites preferred to brood close to woody cover like edge feathering and shrub thickets, which are usually along the edge of the field. Mowing field edges likely destroys some of your best brooding cover for bobwhites.

For those of you that can't stand seeing your mower sit idle this summer, here are some recommendations:

1. Don't mow field edges. Especially if you are interested in bobwhites.
2. Only mow field edges for fire line installation and only around those fields you plan to burn in the coming year. There's no need to mow or disk fire lines or field edges if you don't plan to burn the site this year. If possible, delay mowing fire lines until October, unless you plan a summer burn.
3. Instead of mowing, consider disking or spraying field edges every three to four years. The disked or sprayed area will grow up in ragweed, foxtail and annual lespedeza – quail food. The disked or sprayed area will provide easy walking.
4. If you must mow paths, move the path at least 70 feet out into the field to provide high quality nesting and brooding next to woody cover. Burn, disk or spray the area in between the woody cover and mowed path every two to three years. Remember, quail rarely venture more than 70 feet from woody cover during the winter.
5. If possible, consider moving your field road to the center of the field. Doing so will divide the field in half for alternating burn units. If possible, consider burning through woody draws to keep trees in check.
6. Instead of mowing, create a long, linear food plot around the edge of the field for easy travel for you and a dependable food source and brooding cover for quail.
7. If you must mow, try to delay any mowing until October after the nesting season. Mow trails no shorter than one foot tall to provide adequate overhead cover for quail during the winter. There's no need for a 30 foot wide path if you only need a 10 foot path to drive along!
8. If you must mow, only mow the path once. The path doesn't need to look like a golf course. Unless of course you will eventually use it for a firebreak.

The next time you start up the mower, think twice before you create a “dead zone” in your quail paradise. Mowing field edges will likely destroy some of your best quail habitat and create future management problems. At all cost avoid the urge to mow whole fields or any mowing during the nesting season. Remember, a considerable amount of quail nesting still occurs in August and September when most people believe it is alright to start mowing. Think twice before you create a “dead zone”.

## **Sign up for an e-copy of The Covey Headquarter Newsletter**

Stay in touch with MDC news and events online. Go to the following website - [http://mdc.mo.gov/user\\_mailman\\_register](http://mdc.mo.gov/user_mailman_register) to subscribe to the Covey Headquarters Newsletter via e-mail and get your issue delivered faster. Folks on the e-mail list received this issue by June 5. There are several news releases, newsletters and periodicals listed on this website. Be sure to click “yes” on “Covey Headquarters” to start receiving your issue by e-mail. If you would like to be taken off the print version, please send an e-mail to the address listed at the top of this newsletter.

## Mark Your Calendar

**CRP Field Workshop** – June 12, 1PM – 3:30PM. The workshop will begin at the Dexter USDA Service Center in southeast Missouri before traveling to the field. Contact Scott James at 573-418-0787 for further information.

**Conservation Hero for a Day Event** - June 15. The Bootheel Bobwhites Quail Forever Chapter will host a Conservation Hero for a Day Event in Stoddard Co Missouri. This event will give volunteers an opportunity to install quail friendly habitat on private land. For more information on this event contact Brandon Wirsig (573-624-5939 x136), Tim Kavan (573-748-5245 x119), or Scott James (573-418-0787).

**Invasive Plants Workshop** – June 18, 5:30PM – 7:30PM. A workshop on how to reduce problems from invasive plants will be offered by the Missouri Department of Conservation at the Concordia Community Center, 802 S. Gordon St. The workshop will help property owners and land managers identify and control invasive, non-native plants. Invasive plants often choke out native forbs and grasses friendly to wildlife, and they can pose problems for agriculture. The workshop will address issues for both urban and rural landowners. For more information, call 660-747-8200, ext. 117.

**Pollinator Workshop** – July 23, 6PM – 8PM. Location near Sikeston, MO contact Scott James at 573-418-0787 for further information.

**Prescribed Burn Workshop** – August 6, 5:30PM – 8PM. Fredricktown, MO. For more information and to register, call 573-223-4525.

## Plan for your summer, fall and winter wildlife management now!

With the spring weather at hand, what better way to get a jump on next season's prescribed burning? Now is an ideal time to put in your fire break for your late summer to winter burns. Planning ahead will save you time and allow a better window for burning conditions. The ideal fire break contains 80% to 90% bare soil. The width of the fire break should be at least twice the height of the vegetation to be burned. For example; if you are burning cool season grasses that have a height of 24" then your disked fire break should be at least 4' wide. If you are burning warm season grasses with a height of 6' to 8' then your fire break should be at least 12' to 16' wide. I would recommend at least an 8' wide fire break.

After you have disked the fire break, you can over seed the area with a small grain such as wheat or a legume like ladino clover or annual lespedeza. This will provide beneficial green browse for wildlife over the next season and the following year. The green vegetation can also act as a green line and will not burn. Once these fire breaks are established they are easier to disk up in future years. Starting now can give you more opportunities to get the necessary bare ground that makes a good fire break.

Another step in preparing for your summer, to winter burn is to mow a reduction line inside the disked area. This should be done just prior to your burn. Remember not to mow just to mow! This mowed area (5' to 10' wide) will allow you some room to walk while lighting the grass without the intense heat directly on you. If you are burning warm season grasses, then this reduction line



can be even wider than 10' if necessary. These practices are allowed for burning preparation within CRP acres. If you have any questions on prescribed burning contact your local Biologist or check out Missouri Department of Conservation online at [www.mdc.mo.gov](http://www.mdc.mo.gov)

## Conservation Reserve Program Mid-Contract Management Calendar

|                                   | Jan  | Feb | Mar | April | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |                            |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----|-----|-------|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------------|
| Burn cool-season grasses          |  |     |     |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     | 3/15 – 4/30                |
| Burn warm-season grasses          |  |     |     |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     | 7/16 – 3/15                |
| Disk                              |  |     |     |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     | 7/16 – 12/31               |
| Spray cool-season grasses         |  |     |     |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     | 3/15 – 4/30 or 10/1 – 12/1 |
| Spray warm-season grasses         |  |     |     |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     | 7/16 – 9/15                |
| Interseed Legumes and Wildflowers | <b>IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ABOVE MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT OPTIONS<br/>DO NOT INTERSEED BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL, SERECIA LESPEDEZA, SWEET CLOVER, OR CROWN VETCH</b> |     |     |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |                            |

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